The Churches and Chapels of the East Cheshire Christian Union.

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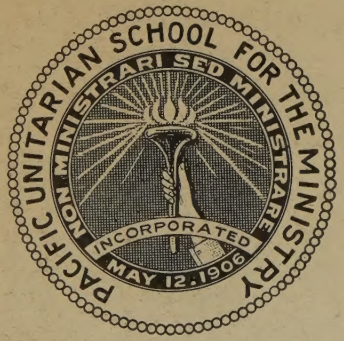

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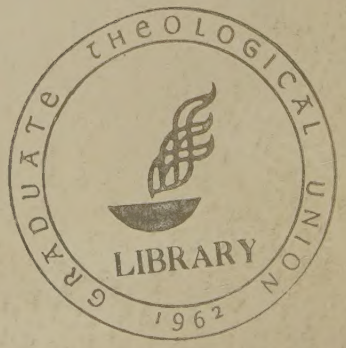

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THE compilers of this little book desire to express their sincere thanks to the Rev. S. A. Steinthal for the history of Manchester College, and to those ministers and laymen of the East Cheshire Christian Union who have so willingly and promptly responded to the invitation to contribute accounts of their respective Churches.

They venture to hope that the book will prove of some service to the Union, and only regret that, owing to limitations of space, it has been found necessary in several cases to condense the accounts, and to omit much matter of general interest.

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MANCHESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

MANCHESTER COLLEGE traces descent from the Academy founded by Richard Frankland in Rathmell in 1670, and after his death it found temporary homes in Manchester, Whitehaven, Bolton, Kendal, and elsewhere. At last it was established in Warrington, with a fuller staff of tutors, from 1757 till 1786, "serving the interests of literature in general, and giving proper encouragement to those students who are designed for the ministry." In 1786 the College was opened in Manchester, with the avowed purpose of giving a full University training to all comers, without demanding the subscription to theological tests which then excluded many from the national Universities. In 1803 the Academy was removed to York, and, under the Principalship of Mr. Wellbeloved, trained many men eminent in public life as well as in the learned professions and the Ministry of the Gospel. In 1840 it returned to Manchester, and carried on its work till 1853, under the Principalships of the Revs. George Wallace, John Kenrick, and G. Vance Smith. Among the tutors we find the names of John James Tayler, J. Martineau, and Francis Newman.

The foundation of University College, London, attracted many of the families who had been accustomed to send their sons to Manchester New College, and it was deemed advisable by its Trustees to employ the open faculty of Arts in London, and confine the work of Manchester New College to the teaching of Philosophy, Theology, and Religion. It was therefore removed to London in 1853, and remained there for 36 years, with J. J. Tayler, J. Martineau, and J. Drummond as successive Principals. When the removal of theological tests had thrown Oxford and Cambridge open to Nonconformists, the Trustees in 1889 transferred their operations to Oxford. For four years the classes of the College were carried on in temporary buildings in High Street till the new buildings in Mansfield Road were opened.

The friends of Manchester College trust that its wanderings are over; but its work is not yet done. In Oxford, where every faculty of the venerable University is now free but one, the College still performs its sacred task, and "its fine building stands as a witness and a home for truth and freedom, and sober, thoughtful religion." *Esto perpetua.*

THE OLD CHAPEL, DUKINFIELD.

DUKINFIELD may justly claim a place in the history of the religious life of England, owing to its intimate connection with the movements known by the names Presbyterian, Independent, Quaker, Moravian, and Unitarian. The Rev. John Angier, B.A. (1605—1677), who received Anglican Orders without subscription, became minister of the Denton Chapel (St. Lawrence's Church) in 1632. On the passing of the Act of Uniformity he neither conformed nor was ejected. In the latter part of his Denton ministry he was assisted by his nephew, the Rev. Samuel Angier (1639—1713). Upon John Angier's death the parishioners petitioned the patrons of the living in favour of the appointment of Samuel Angier, but their prayer was refused. Samuel Angier thereupon removed to Dukinfield, where he conducted worship first in his house, then in a barn, and afterwards in the Old Chapel built on the site given by Sir Robert Dukinfield.

The last six Ministers were: Robert Brook Aspland, M.A., 1837; John Gordon, 1858; John Page Hopps, 1863; Philip Henry Wicksteed, M.A., 1870; George Hamilton Vance, B.D., 1875; Hugon Seaward Tayler, M.A., 1885.

PROTESTANT DISSENTERS' MEETING HOUSE, CONGLETON.

ON a marble tablet at the back of the pulpit is the following inscription, giving in brief the history of this Chapel:—

The Rev. George Moxon Ejected from the Living of Astbury...	1662
His House Licensed for Preaching	1672
First Meeting House Opened...	1687
A Dwelling House Leased for Use as a Meeting House	1712
Same Meeting House Ransacked by a Mob, and the Pulpit, Seats, and Books taken to the Dane Bridge and burned	1714
First Chapel Erected on this Site	1733
Foundation Stone of Present Chapel Laid by T. V. Brocklehurst, of Henbury Park ...	1882
Chapel Opened by Edwin Lawrence, LL.B., of London, and Dedication Sermon preached by Rev. Hy. Ierson, M.A....	1883

The Rev. George Henry Smith, the present Minister, settled in 1897.

BROOK STREET CHAPEL, KNUTSFORD.

THIS ancient Chapel was erected in 1688 by Protestant Dissenters, "for the said congregation to assemble and meet in for praying, preaching, and other religious exercises." So says the first trust deed of 1694, which was in every way a free and open trust.

Matthew Henry preached here in 1692, when an Ordination Service was held, six candidates being admitted to the ministry.

From 1688 to the present time there have been only 15 ministers, giving an average pastorate of 14 years. The ministry of the Rev. Robert Lord extended to 50 years; that of the Rev. Henry Green, M.A., to 45 years. The old three-decker pulpit and the square family pews were removed in 1859. William Tong was the first Minister. The Rev. Wm. Gaskell, M.A., and his wife, Mrs. Gaskell, the author of "Cranford," lie buried in the graveyard.

The last four Ministers have been: Henry Green, M.A., 1827—1872; John Briggs Lloyd, 1873—1885; James Black, M.A., 1886—1889; George Andrew Payne, 1890.

HOSPITAL STREET CHAPEL, NANTWICH.

THE first Meeting House was situated in Pepper Street, and is described in one of the deeds of this property, dated 1794, as a "warehouse, or ancient and decayed piece of building." Matthew Henry preached at Nantwich during June, 1686; and his last sermon was preached here on June 21st, 1714, he dying on the following morning.

According to Bishop Gastrell's returns there were 157 Presbyterian families in Nantwich in the year 1721.

The present Chapel was dedicated in 1726, and afterwards, for three years, was the scene of Joseph Priestley's labours. Here he kept a school which averaged 30 boys. Francis Hornblower was minister here from 1849 until his death in 1853. The Chapel still retains its original oak pews, pulpit, and baptismal font.

DEAN ROW CHAPEL.

A CONSIDERABLE body of Presbyterians must have been gathered together at Dean Row in 1688, as Mr. Eliezer Birch was then appointed as their Minister. The Presbyterian trusts were, for the most part, open ones, binding the Congregations only to maintain their foundations for the worship of God, and to govern themselves in accordance with the Presbyterian polity. Matthew Henry and John Angier occasionally officiated at this Chapel. After 1719 (Salters' Hall Conference, London) Arian doctrines began to spread amongst English Presbyterians, and their later development of Unitarianism now prevails in all their ancient foundations. A gradual decline took place in the Congregation early in the last century, and during the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Morns it completely collapsed. In 1843 successful efforts were made, chiefly through the energies of the Rev. John Colston, Minister of Styal, to revive it. The building was restored, the graveyard enlarged, and the whole place made fit for public worship. Subsequent Ministers: Alfred Payne; P. M. Higginson, M. A.; J. C. Odgers, B.A.; John Felstead; and E. L. H. Thomas, B.A.

KING EDWARD STREET CHAPEL, MACCLESFIELD.

IN 1690 there was an important meeting of Presbyterian and Independent Ministers in Cheshire, which resulted in the building of King Edward Street Chapel, along with others in the County. The first Minister was Dr. Joseph Eaton, in whose time a visit was paid by Matthew Henry, the famous commentator. In 1703 Dr. Adam Holland commenced his ministry. It is recorded that in 1715 he had a congregation of 500, of whom 20 were gentlemen of the neighbourhood; so the Chapel must have been a power in those days. He was succeeded by the Rev. Thos. Culcheth, who laboured faithfully with them for 34 years. The first Unitarian Minister was the Rev. John Palmer, who came from Warrington Academy in 1772. The Rev. L. Pollock was Minister for 41 years. Among Ministers of a later date are Dr. Vance Smith, the Revs John Wright, J. T. Russell, J. Freeston, A. L. Smith, and W. G. Cadman. It is to be hoped that the Chapel has before it as useful a future as its traditions record of the past.

HYDE CHAPEL, GEE CROSS.

THE original Chapel was built in 1708. The following is the list of Ministers:—

JOHN COOPER, 1710—1730.

THOMAS HARTLEY, 1732—1755.

JOHN HAUGHTON, 1756—1761, in whose time the Parsonage was built.

SAMUEL MERCER, 1761—1766.

GEORGE CHECKLEY, 1766—1781. During his ministry the Chapel was enlarged and the Day Schools built.

BRISTOWE COOPER, 1781—1805. He had a School at the Parsonage of some note.

JAMES BROOKS, 1805—1854. During his ministry the first Sunday Schools were built, the area of the graveyard was largely increased; and, eventually, the beautiful new Chapel was built as it now exists.

CHARLES BEARD, from 1850, when he came to assist Mr. Brooks, whom he succeeded in 1854, to 1866. The war in America causing great distress amongst the cotton operatives of the neighbourhood, occupied much of his time and attention.

HENRY ENFIELD DOWSON, from 1867 to the present time. During his ministry great alterations have taken place not only as regards the surroundings of the Chapel yard, the rebuilding of the Schools and Parsonage House, but also in the Services, and in the foundation of other Chapels in the neighbourhood.

UNITARIAN CHURCH, STOCKPORT.

"THE first Chapel was built in High Street in 1721 by that portion of the congregation of the Tabernacle Chapel that seceded in consequence of the high Calvinism preached by the Rev. Samuel Delarose." It is probable that it was at first Presbyterian with an open trust deed. The Chapel was pulled down in 1860; but the graveyard adjoining it was enclosed by a stone wall. The gravestones may still be seen, with such familiar names upon them as Ashton, Barrow, Cheetham, Coppock, Heys, Marsland, and Orrell.

The change from Presbyterianism to Unitarianism probably took place about 1800.

The present Church was opened on March 23rd, 1842, having been built during the pastorate of the Rev. W. Smith. The chancel and two class-rooms were added about 1888. The Jubilee was celebrated in 1892. The large stained-glass window was put in to the memory of Mr. and Mrs. Forester in 1897. The last six Ministers: James Bailey, 1848; Andrea M. Creery, B.A., 1857; Richard Pilcher, B.A., 1864; James Black, M.A., 1867; Alfred Payne, 1883; Benjamin Charles Constable, 1891.

BUXTON CHAPEL.

DR. CLEGG, Nonconformist Minister at Chinley, was the founder of this Congregation. He thus writes in his diary, under date May 2nd, 1725: "The God of Mercy did grant His kind protection through my jorney and gave mee good success in the business I went about, viz., building a place for worship and fixing a minister at Buxton; and, blessed be His name, that work goes forward." On July 25th, 1725, he writes again: "The Chappel at Buxton is now finished, through the good hand of our God upon us. The place was opened ye 15th of July; Mr. J. Platts read ye Scripture and prayed; Mr. Hardy preached from Ephes. ii. 20; betwixt 4 and 500 were present; and on July 18th I preached there in ye afternoon to a considerable number." Mr. Scholfields was the first Minister.

The site of the old Chapel was on Hall Bank, overlooking "The Slopes" and the Crescent Hotel. The present Chapel and Sunday School, with Minister's house attached, are situated in Hartington Road.

NORCLIFFE CHAPEL, STYAL

NORCLIFFE CHAPEL was originally erected in 1824 for the Baptists of the village by Mr. Samuel Greg, of Quarry Bank. The Minister was the Rev. Henry Halford Jones, for many years well known as an astronomer. In 1833, the Baptists having become extinct as a Congregation, Norcliffe Chapel, by permission of Mr. S. Greg, was used by the Unitarians, and the Rev. John Colston commenced a pastorate of 40 years. His name became a household word at Styal. In 1845, owing mainly to his exertions, the neighbouring Chapel at Dean Row was restored, and he assumed the joint pastorate of Dean Row with Styal. The Rev. Alfred Payne succeeded Mr. Colston (1864—1871), and during his ministry the late Mr. Robert Hyde Greg, of Norcliffe Hall, restored the original plain square building, and added a chancel with stained windows. The Rev. Philip Martineau Higginson, M.A., succeeded to the ministry, and remained till 1884. He was succeeded by Mr. J. Collins Odgers, B.A. The Rev. John Felstead followed in 1891, and the present Minister, the Rev. E. L. H. Thomas, B.A., settled in 1900.

FLOWERY FIELD CHURCH, HYDE.

ERECTED by the late Thomas Ashton, of Hyde; opened December, 1878. From 1831 to 1878 the congregation worshipped in the Flowery Field Undenominational Schools. A considerable portion of the work was done by workmen employed at Messrs. Ashton's mills. The building has somewhat the appearance of a college chapel, and is in the Tudor style. The tower rises over the main entrance to a height of 81 feet. The work was designed and superintended by Mr. Thomas Worthington, F.R.I.B.A. Among those present at the opening were the Revs. W. Gaskell, M.A., Charles Beard, B.A., Charles Hargrove, M.A, H. E. Dowson, B.A.; Messrs. Thomas Ashton, John Thornely, and Peter Green. Kertain Smith, first minister of the new Church, was followed by Harold Rylett, who was succeeded by the present Minister, Wm. Lyddon Tucker, M.A. In 1900 a Bazaar, opened by Mrs. Ashton, realised about £1,200. This increased the endowment to £90 per annum, which is insufficient to meet the needs of an entirely working-class congregation. A further £50 per annum is essential if the cause here is to become absolutely self-supporting.

CHRISTIAN CHURCH, STAMFORD ROAD, MOSSLEY.

THIS Congregation has existed since 1841. Its founders seceded from the M. N. C. when Joseph Barker was expelled by Conference for "denying the divine appointment of baptism, and refusing to administer the ordinance." For ten years they worshipped in the "old garret" at Brookbottom. Jas. Robinson was one of the leaders, and often conducted the services, which were based on a system of "free ministrations," until 1859, when the Rev. George Fox became Minister. Mr. Robinson was well fitted for defence of the seceders and for organising them as a Church. A Sunday School was formed with, at one time, a thousand scholars, instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The foundation stone of the present building was laid on Good Friday, 1852, by Sir James Heywood, and the opening services were conducted by the Rev. C. Wicksteed. Other Ministers have been: Revs. J. Ellis, 1864—6; D. Berry, 1866—71; J. G. Slater, 1872—9; E. Turland, 1880—3, and T. R. Elliott, the present Minister, appointed 1883.

MOTTRAM CHAPEL.

IN 1841 Mr. Joseph Barker, a Minister of the New Connexion for Mossley and the neighbourhood, being suspected by some of his fellow-ministers of unorthodoxy, was formally examined on certain doctrinal points. As a result he, together with Mr. Sturges and Mr. Trotter, was expelled from the body. The Mottram society thereupon withdrew from the New Connexion, and appointed the Rev. T. Sturges as their pastor. He became very popular, although it is recorded that "he frightened the young and timid so that they were afraid to stir from their seats." The Rev. Franklin Howarth, of Bury, was the first Unitarian minister to preach in Mottram (1845); he gained the esteem of the people, and did much to strengthen the cause. In 1846 the present Chapel was opened in face of great opposition. It found, however, loyal and true supporters, among whom was Mr. John Barrow, who, after a long life of faithful service to the Chapel and Sunday School, passed to his rest in 1901. The present minister, the Rev. N. Green, was appointed in 1870.

STALYBRIDGE CHURCH

THIS Church is the child of the Old Chapel, Dukinfield. Its founders were Messrs. John Jackson, Joseph Oliver, Samuel Hurst, James Kerfoot, Joseph Greenwood, Joshua Cartwright, John Howard, and a few others. In 1860 occasional services were held in the Foresters' Hall, under the auspices of the East Cheshire Christian Union. A Sunday School was started in July, 1862. Regular religious services were started in 1866, Mr. William Burnley being an active promoter. The foundation stone of the present Church was laid on Good Friday, 1869, by Mrs. Leech, of Gorse Hall, and it was opened for worship on February 17th, 1870. The present School building was opened in 1884.

The first minister was the Rev. Francis Revitt, who was joint Minister of Stalybridge and Mottram 1867 to 1871. He was succeeded by the Rev. Alex. Ashworth, 1872 to 1879. The Rev. Joseph Freeston held the office from 1880 to 1888. The present Minister, the Rev. William Harrison, entered on his duties November, 1888. The Church became independent of the East Cheshire Christian Union in 1887.

FITZALAN STREET CHURCH, GLOSSOP.

1871.—Conference of a few gentlemen interested in the spread of undogmatic religion held in July to discuss the question of starting a cause in Glossop. Course of Public Lectures, under the auspices of the E.C.C.U., in the autumn.

1872.—Regular Sunday Evening Services commenced in an upper room on Norfolk Square. First Service March 17th. Preacher: Rev. H. E. Dowson, B.A. Sunday School established under the management of Mr. Wright Booth, the present superintendent, October 6th.

1875. The Old Chapel and Schoolroom, the gift of the late Mr. Edmund Potter, M.P., and erected at his sole cost, opened on June 12th.

1895.—Memorial Stones of a new Church the present handsome edifice—to which Captain E. Partington, J.P., was a munificent donor, laid April 27th; completed and opened in the following year. About the same time a commodious parsonage was built in the vicinity of the park.

List of Ministers: Rev. F. Ashton, M.A., 1875; Rev. W. Harrison, 1878; Rev. R. H. Lambley, M.A., 1889; Rev. A. Cunliffe Fox, B.A., 1898.

WILTON STREET CHAPEL, DENTON.

FOR some years prior to the foundation of the Chapel, the staple industry of Denton had been undergoing a change which brought many families into the town. Amongst these were a few who had been connected with our congregations at Gee Cross, Gorton, and Manchester. Mr. Robert Kenyon, from Oldham, Mr. R. S. Redfern, from Mottram, and Mr. W. H. Knowles also settled in the district, and threw themselves with energy into the work. In the winter of 1875, after a course of the B. & F. U. A. Jubilee Lectures, given in the Co-operative Hall, the E. C. C. U. organised regular Sunday Evening Services. The first was held on December 19th, the preacher being the Rev. H. E. Dowson, B.A.

The Chapel was opened on May 24th, 1879. On November 1st the Rev. Lawrence Scott entered on his ministry.

In 1880 Mrs. Russell Scott associated herself with the ministry in this Chapel of her son, and strengthened it by founding in 1882 the Russell Scott Memorial Schools, and by erecting in 1893 the building for the Lads' Club.

Charles E. Oliver joined Mr. Scott in 1899.

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE UNITARIAN CONGREGATION.

MARCH 14th, 1897.—First Lecture on Unitarian principles delivered in the Mechanics' Institution by Rev. Frank Walters. This was followed on subsequent Sundays by lectures by Revs. James C. Street, William Binns, W. Copeland Bowie, Charles Hargrove, M.A., and Charles Roper, B.A. Services continued with a view to appointment of permanent minister.

July 25th.—Rev. William Charles Hall, M.A., began his ministry.

October 17th.—Sunday School formed in Temperance Hall.

June 12th, 1898.—Church Building Fund started.

1899.—Richmond Street site secured.

January 1st, 1900.—Cutting of first sod. Building of temporary iron School-Chapel began.

May 13th.—Richmond Street Unitarian School-Chapel opened. Afternoon service conducted by Rev. W. C. Hall (Minister); evening by Rev. H. Enfield Dowson, B.A., President of E. C. C. U.

November 30th—December 1st.—Sale of Work in Mechanics' Institution.

The Congregation has no debt on its present building. Its ministry is supported by the B. & F. U. A. and the E. C. C. U., of which latter institution the Minister is a missionary.

THE BOSTON MILLS SUNDAY SCHOOL AND MISSION CHURCH.

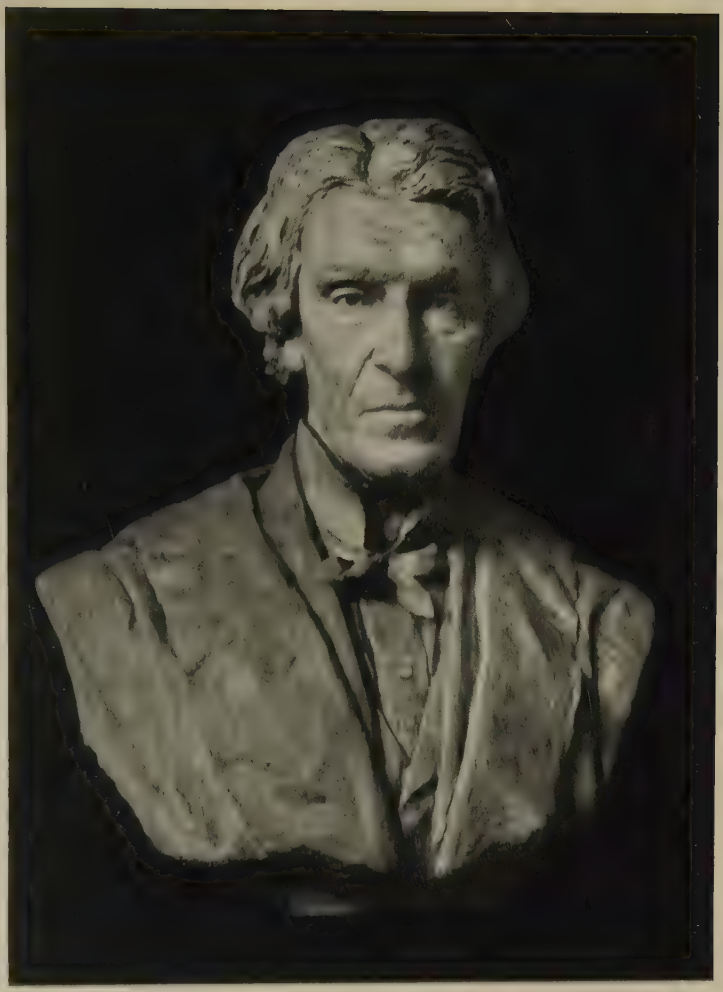
THE above place was built in 1845 by the late John Hibbert and members of his family, who were strong supporters of the Unitarian faith, and deeply interested in the education of the young. Shortly after the opening of the Day Schools, a Sunday School was formed free from sectarian teaching, and continued for about eight years to give religious and secular instruction. Mr. Cousins, a day school teacher, was the principal worker. Services were conducted on Sunday afternoons, but no sermon or discourse was given. In 1889 the Sunday School was reformed. In a report for 1896 the following passage occurs: "Their efforts had been crowned with wonderful success, and the schools are in a flourishing condition." From such success it was thought advisable to form a Mission Church to retain the young people. The Services were commenced in 1894, and carried on until March, 1901, when it was decided to discontinue them during the summer months, and, we regret to say, they have not yet been resumed. The Sunday School is still being carried on.

Alma Mater,
Manchester College, Oxford.

James Martineau,

Aged 32.

(After a bust by Weekes, about 1837.)



James Martineau,

Aged 72.

E. K. Mathews, Newin., 1877.

The Old Chapel, Dukinfield.

Congleton Chapel.

Knutsford Chapel and Mrs. Gaskell's Grave.

Nantwich Chapel.

Dean Row Chapel.

King Edward Street Chapel, Macclesfield.

Hyde Chapel, Gee Cross.

Hyde Chapel, Gee Cross.

St. Petersgate Chapel, Stockport.

Buxton Chapel.

Norcliffe Chapel, Styal.

Flowery Field Chapel.

Mossley Chapel.

Mottram Chapel.

Stalybridge Chapel.

Fitzalan Street Chapel, Glossop.

Wilton Street Chapel, Denton.

Proposed New Chapel, Ashton-under-Lyne.

Boston Mills Chapel.

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